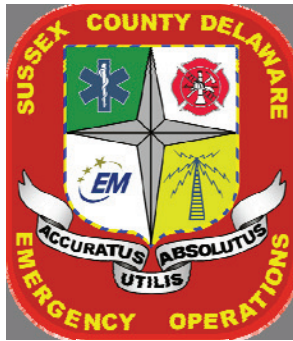


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Sussex County prepares public for another Atlantic hurricane season

Forecasters predict 'active to extremely active' storm season

**FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**

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June 1 marks the start of the Atlantic hurricane season, and national forecasters are predicting this season, after a lull in tropical activity in 2009, could stir up plenty of trouble in the waters and months ahead.

The Sussex County Emergency Operations Center reminds residents and visitors to prepare now, when the weather is calm, before a storm takes aim at the coast. This week is Hurricane Preparedness Week, and now is the perfect time to give thought to the approaching tropical season.

Preparation ahead of the storm is key to limiting and preventing loss of property, said Sussex County EOC Director Joseph L. Thomas. Most importantly, though, planning now can save lives later.

"We're blessed to live in a wonderful place with our beaches and all of nature surrounding us, but that comes with a price," Mr. Thomas said. "Unfortunately, some people have a tendency to forget this. Coastal areas are one major storm away from disaster, so it's imperative to always be ready. Hope for the best, but always, always be prepared for the worst."

For the 2010 Atlantic hurricane season, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is predicting an above-average year, with 14 to 23 named storms. Eight to 14 of those are predicted to become hurricanes, of which three to seven could become major hurricanes of Category 3 strength or higher, according to the NOAA forecast released today.

Forecasters have said this year could be among the busier seasons of the past decade, which includes the storied 2005 season, when a record 28 storms formed in the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. Conversely, 2009 is considered to have been among the more quiet seasons, with only nine named storms forming in the Atlantic basin. An average season sees 11 names storms.

“If this outlook holds true, this season could be one of the more active on record,” Jane Lubchenco, under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator, said today. “The greater likelihood of storms brings an increased risk of a landfall. In short, we urge everyone to be prepared.”

To help make the storm season safer for everyone, here are some steps you can take to make your home and family ready for hurricane season:

- If you live in a flood-prone or other vulnerable area, be prepared to evacuate. Plan your evacuation route now. Emergency managers will notify the public, via the media, of what areas should evacuate and when. In the event you evacuate, take a storm kit with you. Take valuable and/or important papers with you. Secure your house by locking the windows and doors. Turn off all utilities (gas, water, electric, etc.) Notify a family member or someone close to you outside the evacuation area of your destination.
- Secure all outdoor items. Property owners also will need to secure their boats. Area residents should clear rainspouts and gutters and trim any trees that may pose a problem during high winds.
- Have a family disaster kit. This kit should include the following items:
 - A three-day supply of water. This should include at least one gallon of water per person per day;
 - Non-perishable foods and a manual can opener;
 - A change of clothes and shoes for each person;
 - Prescription medicines;
 - A blanket or sleeping bag and pillow for each person;
 - Personal hygiene items;
 - A flashlight and extra batteries for each person;
 - Special needs items, such as formula and diapers for infants, as well as items needed for elderly or disabled family members;
 - A portable radio with extra batteries;
 - Money. During power outages, ATMs will not work;
 - Fuel. Gas pumps are also affected by power outages, so it is a good idea to have fuel in advance.

- In the event of an approaching storm, travel during daylight hours. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE TO MAKE PLANS OR TO PURCHASE GASOLINE AND SUPPLIES.** When a storm watch is issued, you should monitor the storm on the radio and television. An evacuation could take 24 to 36 hours prior to a storm's onset.
- If ordered to evacuate and seek shelter elsewhere, follow the instructions of local emergency managers on where to go and when. Authorities will announce shelter locations in advance of their opening. Make provisions for your pets, as many shelters will not accept animals.
- If not ordered to evacuate and you decide to take shelter in your home, have your disaster kit ready. Keep your important papers with you or store them in the highest, safest place in your home, and in a waterproof container. Even if you seek shelter in place, you need to secure your home by locking the doors and windows. Turn off all utilities (gas, water, electric, etc). Monitor the storm by portable radio to keep up with the latest information. Stay indoors. Try to stay in an inside room away from doors and windows.
- Use your phone sparingly. Make only essential calls and keep the calls brief. Report emergencies to 911. When reporting emergencies, identify yourself and your location, making sure to speak clearly and calmly. If you have a mobile telephone, make sure it is charged and ready to use at all times. Remember, however, that cell service may be interrupted during and after the storm.

Past storm seasons have shown that hurricanes and tropical storms can have devastating effects. In the event a hurricane affects our area, expect polluted water, limited communications, no electricity, overflowing or backed-up sewers, undermined foundations, beach erosion and heavy damage to homes and roadways.

Do not re-enter the area until recommended to do so by local authorities. As you re-enter the area, be aware of possible hazards such as downed trees and power lines. Be aware of debris and water on roadways. Upon re-entry, have identification and important legal papers ready to show officials proof of residency. Continue to use your emergency water supply or boil water until notified that the drinking water is safe. Take precautions to prevent fires.

Hurricane season begins June 1 and ends Nov. 30.

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For more information on preparing for hurricane season, including evacuation maps and preparedness brochures, visit www.sussexcountysde.gov/services/storm. Another helpful source is the NOAA Hurricane Preparedness Week homepage, www.nhc.noaa.gov/HAW2.